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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews research on preservice teachers' need for a multicultural education program, finding that preservice teachers who have not developed their awareness, knowledge, and skills for working with diverse populations will be inadequately prepared to meet the classrooms of a diverse society. A survey was conducted concerning students' perceived beliefs about their cultural sensitivity, biases/prejudices, and multicultural education. The respondents were 45 students from methods classes at California State University, Northridge, and Pacific Lutheran University; both groups of students had experienced multicultural concepts in various components of their educational program. Respondents indicated a high degree of cultural sensitivity in both pre- and post-administration of the survey. Respondents attributed their perception of being seldom biased/prejudiced on the belief that all people have value and worth as individuals; they viewed multicultural education as a vehicle to learn about, respect, and accept all cultures. They conceptualized multicultural education partly as a reformative and partly as an additive process. They perceived an effective multicultural teacher as one who recognizes the individualities of students and meets their unique/diverse needs. Four out of five respondents were concerned more with teacher control than student needs. (Contains 31 references.) (JDD)

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PERCEPTION OF MULTICULTURAL CONCEPTS BY PRESERVICE TEACHERS IN TWO INSTITUTIONS*

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Incorporating a multicultural perspective to the curriculum entails conceptualizing multicultural education as a reformative rather than an additive process (Hillis, 1993). We should not simply add a number of ethnic groups and perspectives to the curriculum. This additive approach does not lead to change in attitudes and beliefs (McDiarmid, 1992). Instead, we should look at multicultural education as a method of "seeing" that should transform the way we teach (Suzuki, 1979). This posture follows the multicultural model espoused by Banks (1991). This perspective not only allows for a more comprehensive picture, but it also multiplies a teacher's opportunities to examine such critical concepts as *culture, conflict, and identity* (Hillis, 1993). Students receiving a multicultural curriculum will have to wrestle with the realities, conflicts, tensions, and power struggles within a pluralistic and democratic society.

The transformation of a Eurocentric curriculum into one of balanced ethnic and cultural perspectives will facilitate dialog and enable teachers and students to critically examine political, social, and economic issues related to living in American society. The movement from an Ethnic Additive model to a multicultural model is the best hope for changing schooling from a reproduction to one of production (Hillis, 1993). Schools of education can exercise leadership in this effort (Garcia & Pugh, 1993; Mosher & Sia, 1993).

As teacher educators, how far are we in facilitating our preservice teachers' internalization of the multicultural model? Have we given them an opportunity to examine their beliefs about their own cultural sensitivity, their biases/prejudices, their need to change own beliefs/biases, their needs/wants to learn to teach multicultural education, and their concern about diversity in the classroom? This exercise gives meaning to the transformative curriculum which not only helps students to acquire knowledge from diverse perspectives, but it also helps them develop caring attitudes and feeling and take action to create a more humane nation and world (Banks, 1994).

Studies show that preservice teachers who have not had the opportunity to develop their awareness, knowledge, and skills at working with diverse populations will be inadequately prepared

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to meet the classrooms of a diverse society (Avery & Walker, 1993). Thus, teacher training institutions must try to sensitize prospective teachers to the needs of a diverse student population. This can be done by immersing the students in experiential learning activities wishing to enter the teaching profession (Young, 1993).

The challenge is posed to teacher educators who must help students recognize what teaching a diverse population of children involves, develop willingness and commitment to teaching them, and develop the educational perspectives and skills necessary to combat inequities in access to knowledge and power (Ross & Smith, 1992). In the process teacher educators must help students identify and confront their beliefs about society, education, and the social conditions of schooling (Liston & Zeichner, 1990).

Following Paine's (1990) categories of orientation to cultural diversity, Ross and Smith (1992) reported case studies of six preservice teachers to assess their emerging perspectives about the problems that confront diverse learners, and their beliefs about the causes of failure for diverse learners. Findings indicated that these students perceive that their perspectives are influenced by course work, their background experiences, contrasting field experiences and their entering perspectives. The attitudes and orientations of the sample students suggest that teacher education programs even within monocultural institutions, may be able to help many students develop the knowledge and attitudes necessary to work with multicultural students.

Reed (1991) found that preservice teachers need a multicultural education program that provides specific instruction in the development of positive attitudes and behaviors toward culturally different children, the knowledge of cultural characteristics of children which may have an effect on learning and the ability to select and use appropriate instructional strategies and materials.

In another study, Reed (1993) found that preservice teachers perceived the practicum experience to be the most important part of the unit and the course. Actually working in a real school with real live children had the greatest impact on their attitudes toward minority children. Observations revealed that their behaviors toward the children also improved.

Research literature in teacher education clearly indicates the premier roles played by attitudes towards diversity, cultural sensitivity, and commitment to the application of cultural knowledge upon minority students' academic success (Skeeter & Grant, 1988; Banks, 1994; Gollnick & Chinn, 1986; Nel, 1992).

In the final analysis, teachers' perceptions and beliefs could be the contributing factor to either the empowerment or the disabling of minority students (Nel, 1993). In light of this, it behooves upon teacher educators to make beliefs important as features of preprofessional programs and legitimate sources of inquiry (Pajares, 1993). Teacher educators can then work to explore, identify, and challenge beliefs by providing reasonable alternatives.

More research on multicultural concepts follow.

Cultural Sensitivity. Cultural sensitivity is a critical multicultural concept. Experiences in school are helpful in raising children's awareness to cultural differences but teachers themselves must be ready to accept differences in children (Pyszkowski, 1993). Berry (1992) reported her first encounter in a multicultural education experience filled with apprehension as she had her mostly Latino students debate the topic: *The Melting Pot is Appropriate for American Youth Today*. The debate succeeded in making the students come alive as they took charge on their educational process and in making the teacher as well as the students more sensitive to cultural differences and contributions.

A culturally sensitive teacher offers classroom instruction that is supportive of the students' cultural background and the knowledge they bring to school (Branch, 1993). To enhance cultural sensitivity of the teacher and to promote an atmosphere conducive to learning for all students, make certain that you understand your own perceptions and feelings about any racial, ethnic or religious group to be discussed and to present culturally sensitive issues to your students positively (Branch, 1993.

Awareness of One's Own Biases/Prejudices. Teachers tend to perceive issues based upon their own limited cultural experience. Internal conflict or negative feelings from within often arise when examining one's own perceptions about specific cultural perspectives. Such feelings need to be resolved prior to initiating discussion about culturally sensitive topics; otherwise, unbalanced and biased information is presented as accurate content or the only approach to learning a particular subject (Branch, 1993).

Perception of Multicultural Education (MCE). Preservice students view cooperation, tolerance and assimilation of minority groups as the major goals of MCE in our schools. Expressing concern of this myopic view, Nel (1993) highlighted the need for visionary leadership in the education of preservice teachers.

Perception of Need to Teach MCE. Wayson (1988) reported that 40% of preservice teachers felt that they were not prepared with adequate skills for teaching multicultural populations. Most importantly, this same study found that students would be unlikely to implement knowledge about particular ethnic groups into the curriculum due to a "serious lack of knowledge about ethnic groups, their culture, their history, and their participation in, or contributions to, American life".

Prospective teachers at both primary and secondary levels, while endorsing the need for equal treatment of subjects, seem to perceive diversity in terms of ethnic minority presence in schools as a problem (Carrington, Millward & Short, 1986).

Prospective teachers believe that teachers can make a difference by expecting high academic performance of minority children and also believe that teachers must be aware of and include elements of diverse cultures (Contreras, 1988), yet many majority culture individuals among them

state openly their lack of preparedness and their unwillingness to teach children with cultural characteristics and needs different from their own (Avery & Walker, 1993).

Concern about Diversity in the Classroom. Prospective educators are found to be concerned about children "at risk", uncomfortable with people who speak non-standard English (Larke & McJamerson, 1990), uninformed about the history of ethnic groups in the U.S. (Moultry, 1988; Wayson, 1988), and unwilling to teach in inner-city schools (Moultry, 1988).

The exploration of issues of diversity with our students may best begin with a deeper understanding of the origins of their (and our) beliefs (Avery & Walker, 1993). This is critical especially that deeply held beliefs and values have incredible durability (Boston, 1994).

Approaches to MCE. The current approach to teacher education has been described as a weak intervention and research has demonstrated that frequently attitudes and beliefs do not change during preservice training (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Kagan, 1992). If teacher education is to consistently change the parochial views of students to teach MCE effectively more time in and out of class, and more intense educational experiences will be needed (Sutton, 1993).

Much more research on effective ways to change attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors is necessary (Sutton, 1993).

The cultural plunge and educational biosketch, as cultural awareness techniques, were found to be effecfive and easy way to implement (Young, 1993). Students who undertook the cultural plunge eventually say that the sterotypes they held were mostly untrue and used "to blame the victim". Students who chose to write an educational biosketch wrote about the pain of being prejudiced against and the pride of growing up biculturally. Others wrote about growing up in a mostly homogeneously white middle class area and wished they had more exposure to other cultures.

Preliminary Survey: Perception of Multicultural Concepts by Preservice Teachers in Two Institutions

Sampling. Eighteen students (3 males and 15 females) from a combined science/mathematics methods class participated in both pre- and post- administration of the survey at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). These students had intensive methods course for the first seven weeks of the semester and spent the remaining eight weeks in student teaching in all public multicultural classrooms. Prior to this semester, they had done one semester of student teaching and a combined methods class in language arts/social studies where multicultural education is integrated in the curriculum. They likewise completed the multicultural course requirement of at least six semester hours in such courses as Latin-American Studies, African-American Studies, etc. No special attempt was made to deal with multicultural concepts in the already loaded science/math methods class. However, meeting the needs of the diverse learners was emphasized in their development of a science unit plan which they were to implement in student

teaching. The first administration was given in the first week of classes and the post administration was given in the last week of student teaching. After student teaching, these students will have their preliminary teaching credential.

Twenty-seven (5 males and 22 females) students from a general methods class participated in the survey at Pacific Lutheran University (PLU). Multicultural education is integrated in this methods class and students do practicum in schools. The pre-administration was given in early September and the post administration was given in mid-December.

The CSUN sample contained 17 whites and One Asian. The age ranged from 23-48, with the majority of them in the early to mid-twenties. The PLU sample contained all white respondents, with age ranging from 20-35. Most of these respondents were in their early twenties. Both samples have a combined total of 45 respondents.

Instrument Used. The survey instrument contained seven open-ended items that elicit subjects' perceived belief of their cultural sensitivity, biases/prejudices, what they would like to change about their beliefs/biases, what multicultural education means, what it means to be an effective multicultural teacher, what they want/need to learn to teach in culturally, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse classrooms, and their concern regarding diversity in the classroom. Data on demographics included gender, age, ethnic background, and age of first multicultural contact.

Results and Discussion

Cultural Sensitivity. Respondents indicated a high degree of cultural sensitivity in both pre- and post- administration from the CSUN sample (78%). There was no change observed from pre- to post-. The PLU sample showed a generally high degree of and an increase of 69% in their cultural sensitivity after the post- administration. Respondents attributed their cultural sensitivity to early exposure to people coming from other cultures, to their knowledge about diverse cultures, to positive and negative experiences in schools, and to travel.

The CSUN respondents' high degree of cultural sensitivity could be due to such additive factors as initial coursework in the multicultural requirement, their frequent contact with people coming from diverse background, their early field experiences in public schools as required prior to student teaching, the integration of multicultural concepts in the teacher education program, and their first student teaching experience in a diverse classroom. The findings corroborated Young's (1993) and Avery & Walker's (1993) research on the importance of sensitizing prospective teachers to the needs of a diverse student population by immersing them in experiential learning activities in the multicultural classroom.

The increase in multicultural sensitivity in the PLU sample could be due to the cultural sensitivity exercise in their social studies methods class and the accompanying practicum in public

school setting where the preservice teachers have multicultural experiences with diverse learners. This supported Berry's (1992) finding that the classroom debate not only succeeded in making students come alive, but made both teacher and students more sensitive to cultural differences and contributions. By being sensitive to cultural differences, teachers not only retain their own cultural identity, but at the same time recognize the diverse backgrounds represented by students in their classrooms (Branch et al, 1993).

Some of the respondents' concern about children "at risk" and their concern about being with people who speak nonstandard English and uninformed about the history of ethnic groups in the U.S. echoed earlier findings (Campbell & Farrel, 1985; Larke & McJamerson, 1990; Moultry, 1988).

Biases/Prejudices. None of the respondents from both samples indicated that they were always biased/prejudiced. The CSUN sample contained some 22% who indicated that they felt that they were sometimes biased/prejudiced, while 78% indicated that they seldom were biased/prejudiced. The PLU sample indicated an increase of respondents who perceived themselves as seldom biased/prejudiced (70% post vs 63% pre). Respondents attributed their perception of having seldom biases/prejudices on the belief that we all have value and worth as individuals. One respondent said "Since I know what it is like to be subjected to prejudice, I really try hard not to make preconceived notions about other individuals".

As cultural sensitivity increases, biases/prejudices tend to decrease. Results from both samples supported this contention. The samples indicated high degree of cultural sensitivity and low degree of biases/prejudices. Again the additive effect of those factors that influence cultural sensitivity may also be at work in resolving biases/prejudices.

The above finding may run counter Kagan's (1992) statement that research has demonstrated that frequently attitudes and beliefs do not change during preservice training, but does support Sutton's (1993) exhortation that more time out of class and more intense educational experiences will be needed if teacher education is to consistently change the parochial views of students to teach multicultural education.

Changing Beliefs/Biases. When asked which beliefs/biases they would like to change, the vast majority of both samples indicated that they would like to have more knowledge about cultures which could make them to be more sensitive and understanding of people that are of different
cultural backgrounds. They felt that experience will have a role to play in their belief system. Only five of the entire sample indicated that they found nothing they'd change. One indicated that it is not necessarily change, but "I can always be more aware of different cultures".

Respondents in both samples gave generalized statements regarding changing one's beliefs/biases, e.g., "gain more knowledge in unfamiliar areas", "know more about other cultures".

Majority, however, indicated that they should not stereotype people. The paucity of specificity on areas where changes are needed is consistent with the respondents' need for more knowledge of other cultures. This needs to be addressed in order to avoid what Branch (1992) cautioned regarding the presentation of unbalanced and biased information as accurate content.

Perception of What Multicultural Education Means. The pre- and post- responses of both samples were very similar. They view multicultural education as a vehicle "to learn about, respect, and accept all cultures". Some extend this concept to include special education population and those of differfent sexual orientation.

Respondents' perception of the meaning of multicultural education indicated that they conceptualize multicultural education partly as a reformative and partly as an additive process. The desire of some to know more about other ethnic groups , to speak Spanish as multicultural education and to view tolerance and assimilation of minority groups as MCE goals echo Nel's (1993) concern of the myopic view of MCE. The emerging reformative view of multicultural education by the reespondents can be gleaned from such comments as "taking into consideration the backgrounds of children from different countries and teaching from these varied perspectives", "integrating different cultural perspectives and literature into the curriculum", and "teaching students to appreciate and respect differences in their peers".

Perception of What It Means to be an Effective Multicultural Teacher. Pre- and post- responses from both samples were very similar. They perceived an effective multicultural teacher as one who recognizes the individualities of students and meets their unique/diverse needs. They viewed this teacher to be knowledgeable about other cultures and to use many different teaching styles so as to reach all students, being sensitive to their differences. They further viewed this teacher as being able to listen, to adapt, and to promote positive cultural interactions. This teacher should also be able to develop children's perspectives and attitudes about other cultures.

Respondents from both samples seem to show that an effective MCE teacher follows the multicultural model espoused by Banks (1994) and supported by Hillis (1993) and Garcia & Pugh (1993).

Perception of What Is Wanted/Needed to Teach in Culturally, Ethnically and Socio-economically Diverse Classrooms. Responses to this question were very similar to the responses to the previous question for both samples. Majority perceived that modifying the curriculum to meet the diverse needs of students is imperative. Knowledge of other cultures and accepting attitudes and sensitivities were mentioned. Respect for the strengths of diversity without reinforcing or building negative biases was perceived to be necessary.

Concern about Classroom Diversity. Pre- and post- responses were similar in both samples. It is interesting to note that four out of five respondents were concerned more with teacher

control than student needs. Responses like "Will I be able to handle it and do a good job teaching with it?", "Will I have enough knowledge or information to teach effectively?", "Teachers having to know too much about too many cultures", and "How to deal with students' prejudices" are real concerns that respondents perceived regarding diversity in the classroom.

The respondents' preoccupation with maintaining teacher control, although a legitimate concern, may have an effect on their ability to perceive students' needs as crucial in multicultural education. There is a need to explore the origin of this belief (Avery & Walker, 1993). This is critical expecially that deeply held beliefs and values have incredible durability (Boston, 1994).

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